United Nations A/HRC/29/NGO/95

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 June 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Twenty-ninth session
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Al-khoei Foundation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-09355 (E)

1509355

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Persecuted Minorities and IDPs in Iraq

Most of Iraq's ethnic and religious communities have been persecuted by extremist groups such as ISIL, especially the Christians, Yezidis, Shabaks, Turkmen, Faili Kurds and Kaka'es. The so-called "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) is systematically targeting minority communities in Iraq. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, as of May 2015, there have been 3,276,000[1] Internally Displaced People (IDP) in the country with at least 2.2 million displaced since the invasion of ISIL in June 2014.

The Orphan Charity Organization in coordination with the Ministry of Migration and Displaced in Iraq published initial figures of where the displaced are currently located:

Karbala: 90,076; Najaf: 78,859; Kurdistan: 56,200; Babel: 55,229; Waset: 36,876; Aldiwaneeya: 20,000; Basra: 12,000; Diqar: 10,076; Baghdad: 5,974; Meysan: 5,220

There are still millions more who have yet to find shelter or a place to relocate. For instance, in Ramadi, the capital of the province of Anbar, over 25,000[2] individuals have been displaced within a week. Many died in the heat after walking for days, in search of a temporary place to stay in. The Shabaks, Yezidis, Turkmen and Kurdish Failis are some of those who have suffered for long.

Shabak

The Shabaks are an ethnic minority that reside in 64 villages around the city of Mosul, Al-Hamdaniya, Telkef and Bashiqa and their population is approximately over 250,000. Most of the Shabaks are Shi'ites and the rest are Sunnis who live closely and in harmony with their Christian and Yazidi neighbours. Shabaks are known of their strong culture and tradition, which distinguishes them from other Iraqi ethnic backgrounds. Although many of them speak the Arabic, Shabaks mother tongue language is a combination of Farsi and Kurdish.

The first city that ISIL targeted was Mosul and its surrounding villages where they launched a massive attack on the areas. The Shabaks were specifically targeted for their sect and Shi'ite belief[3] and were either killed or forced to leave their homes. Many became displaced and took refuge in camps near Kurdistan. Some of them managed to arrive at Najaf and Karbala, an approximate of 700km away. Many of their properties such as cars, furniture and farming equipment were confiscated by ISIL and their herds were sold in the markets. Their places of worship, religious centres and holy shrines were destroyed. Even the roads that led them back to their villages and homes were planted with booby traps.

Shabaks have been severely abused by ISIL who consider them to be infidels for their religious belief. Many of the Shabaks were beheaded and their women were sold as slaves in the market. The crimes committed against Shabak are grave violations against human rights and humanity, which are often not reported by the media or included in the UN reports.

[1] http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures

[2] http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50894#.VWJDf1z46fQ

[3] Even before the invasion of ISIL, the Shabaks were victims of previous terrorist groups where over 1000 individuals were killed. They were always subjected to marginalisation.

Yazidis

The Yazidi faith is one of the many faiths that exist in Iraq with an approximate population of over half a million. Yazidis live either in Kurdistan or in the region of Mosul.

The Iraqi constitution first recognised the Yazidi as a religious sect in 2005 where they were given the freedom to worship. Terrorist and extremist groups such as ISIL have been continuously marginalising and targeting them for being 'infidels' and 'devil worshippers' despite the fact that their religion is a monotheistic one. Yazidi men have been killed and their women have been captured and sold as slaves in the market and sexually assaulted, which have led many to take their own lives. ISIL has been forcing them to either convert to their religion or die. According to the UN, this has resulted into 200,000 Yazidis to flee to Mount Sinjar where they spent days without food or water. Thousands of displaced Yazidi elderly and children died as they were walking for days seeking shelter and refuge. The Yazidis suffered the same as the Shabaks, where their properties were aiso taken away and sold in the markets.

Turkmen

The Turkmen is another ethnic minority in Iraq, mostly residing in Mosul, Erbil, Kirkuk, Salahadin and Diyala. Their current population, which speaks the Turkish language, is approximately over 3 million and are either Muslims or Christians. From the 17th of June to the 31st of August 2014 the city of Amerli was under the siege of ISIL. The Turkmen struggled to survive without food, medicine, clean water supply and electricity for 80 days whilst fighting to defend their hometown against the terrorists.

Besheer, another Turkmen Shiite village was attacked by ISIL. Their mosques and places of worship were destroyed and around 1000 families were forced to leave. The city of Telfar was also invaded, with an estimate of 350,000 displaced from there. Many of them fled to Najaf and Karbala for shelter provided by the Holy Shrines but many of them died on the way too. An approximate of 45,000 families have been displaced from Diyala.

Faili Kurds

The Faili Kurds are another ethnic community that have been constantly persecuted by ISIL, including the destruction of their places of worship. The following figures are an approximate number of Faili Kurds displaced from each city or village:

Beladruz: 5,000

Qezaniya: 8,000

Tebah Village: All of its residents have been displaced

Sadiyeh: 8,000

Meqdadiya: 4,000

Jelwa': 6,000

Hamreen: 4,000

Khanqeen: 2,000

Many of the displaced have sought refuge in Dahook, Arbil and between the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

IDPs in Najaf and Karbala

The offices of the Holy Shrines in Najaf and Karbala have been sheltering over 160,000 IDPs from different ethnic backgrounds including Christians, Sabaeans, Faili Kurds, Turkmen and other Iraqis including Sunnis and Shi'ites. The offices have set up specialised centres such as "The Centre for welcoming and sheltering IDP's" to receive the internally displaced and provide them with basic necessities including shelter, food and medication.

These individuals are placed in "Mawakeb", a term referring to space that is used for religious commemorations. Mawakebs that are used for the IDPs in the South of Iraq are located between the Holy city of Najaf and Karbala, which are generally used annually by the public for a period of ten days in the season of Arbaeen. Mawakebs between Najaf and Karbala range from stalls to tents or halls and include very basic utility and infrastructure.

Although the offices of the Holy Shrine have anticipated the arrival of IDPs since the invasion of ISIL, the committee for sheltering IDPs is not able to meet their basic needs. The mawakebs are not equipped to host people for a long period of time especially in the scorching heat of the summer in Iraq. Air conditioners, coolers, fans and refrigerators are essential needs in the summer that are not available in mawakebs. Families have no choice but to share the mawakebs, restraining their privacy and making it more difficult for them to be independent. In many cases, a mawakeb would have up to three or four families who separate themselves with curtains. This has led to a spread of scabies, which has been a challenge to the offices of the Holy Shrine due to the lack of medicine and medical equipment such as sterilisers. The overcrowding of individuals in mawakebs has also reduced sanitation levels, exposing them to numerous hygiene related diseases.

Children are also suffering from the lack of space, emotionally and physically. Not only are they exposed to out breaking diseases but also they suffer from lack of healthy nutrition and diet. They are not receiving their basic right of education or a have place to play and release their energy.

Recommendations:

The Al-Khoei Foundation strongly urges the Council to:

Investigate ISIL atrocities and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes against humanity;

Deploy humanitarian strategies aiding the IDPs across the country;

Urge Member States to collectively defeat ISIL and stop its growth in Iraq and Syria;

Urge Member States to dismantle the social media network of ISIL and other similar organizations, in order to prevent the further spread of their ideology;

Act upon preserving ethnic minorities in Iraq who are one of the oldest existing communities and to promote their identities;

Demand educational reforms in the Middle East to encourage freedom of religion, plurality, respect to religious traditions and minorities and refraining from using teaching material for preaching hate and discord;

To implement mechanism in order to hold non-state actors accountable for their crimes;

To develop international instruments in finding appropriate mechanism to protect sacred and heritage sites in Iraq and across the globe;

We call to promote equal protections of Internally Displaced People and ethnic and religious minorities under the law, and to combat impunity for targeted violence around the world.